

Vienna Hat Co. & Dart Drug Store  
431-437 Eleventh St.  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-482

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265-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

431-437 Eleventh Street, N.W.

(Vienna Hat Company/Dart Drug Store)

Location: Square 348, Lot 10, <sup>HABS No. DC-482</sup> 431-437 Eleventh Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., Southeast corner of Eleventh and 'E' Streets.

Present Owner: 1001 Pennsylvania Associates (December 1979).

Present Occupant: Dart Drug Store (433-437) and Vienna Hat Company (437).

Present Use: Retail sales; upper floors vacant/storage.

Future Use: The structure will be incorporated into a new, full block multi-use structure, designed by Hartman-Cox with Smith Segreti Tepper, and built for developers D.W. Evans and R.S. Cohen.

Significance: The strong detailing and large scale of this late Nineteenth Century Italianate commercial building are well suited to its prominent corner site. It serves as an anchor to the eclectic mix of small scale structures along the east side of Eleventh Street.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: According to Permit #1799, the building was built in the spring of 1893. (Permit dated 22 March).
2. Architect: William Poindexter, then located at 1320 F Street, N.W., designed this structure in 1892.

Poindexter, whose first professional association was with Joseph C. Hornblower, was known in Washington for his ability to represent local tastes and talents rather than introducing new building types. Although his work can be characterized as eclectic, the majority of his early and mid-career work was based on the principles of Romanesque design, borrowing frequently from the work of H.H. Richardson.

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His residential designs appeared in the prestigious neighborhoods of Washington with unifying elements of brick as building material, pressed brick ornamentation, projecting bay windows and irregular shapes. Some examples of his residential designs are 1303 New Hampshire Ave, N.W. (1885), 1300 Seventeenth Street, N.W. (1887), 1605 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. (1891), and the alterations on the summer house of Grover Cleveland (1886).

Poindexter's early to mid-career commercial buildings in Washington use the Romanesque tradition of pressed brick. His solutions incorporated several businesses in one building, which is evident in the design for 431-437 Eleventh Street, N.W. In the same general area, other Poindexter buildings include 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue (1886-facade dismantled in 1979 by Cabot, Cabot and Forbes in conjunction with PADC), 1331 F Street, N.W. (1898), Washington Post Building at Tenth and 'D' Streets, N.W. (1880), 414 Ninth Street, N.W. (1895), and 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. (1893). He is credited with the design of the original and main building of the Soldiers Home, and was the winner of a design competition for the Columbian University (George Washington University) building at Fifteenth and 'H' Streets, N.W. (1882), which was demolished in 1911.

Poindexter also completed works in various parts of Virginia.

(Source: Harris, Emily: William Poindexter, A Washington and Virginia Architect; Collection of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.).

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title of the land on which the structure is located. References are the District of Columbia General Assessment Records

and the District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds.

1839 Assessed as west one-half of Lot 10 to William Orme.

1864 Assessed as east one-half of Lot 10 to William Orme,  
previously owned by Edwin Green.

1958 Deed 18 January, recorded 20 January 1958 in  
Liber 10984, Folio 453.

Edgar J. Orme, Sr.

to

Wilbert L. Anderson

1958 Deed 18 January 1958, recorded 20 January 1958 in  
Liber 10984, Folio 457.

Wilbert L. Anderson

to

Edgar J. Orme, Sr., et. ux., tenants by entirety.

1975 Deed 3 November 1975, recorded 5 November 1975 in  
Instrument #28539.

Robert C. Orme, Edgar J. Orme, Jr., James Orme, Jr.,  
and Edgar J. Orme, III

to

E. Fulton and Laura Brylawski

1979 Deed December 1979, not yet recorded

E. Fulton Brylawski

to

1001 Pennsylvania Associates

4. Builder, Contractor: Nicholas Eckhardt, Washington, D.C.
5. Original plans and construction: Although no original plans  
exist, Building Permit #1799 (To Build) describes 431-437 Eleventh

as a three-story structure plus cellar measuring 50' x 75' x 40' high, with concrete foundations, hip roof, and six show windows projecting three feet from the building line and each ten feet in width. The first floor was divided into three rectangular retail spaces and one residence at 431 Eleventh Street. Rental office space occupied the second floor above 433-437 Eleventh Street, while the second floor of 431 Eleventh Street was part of the Orme residence. The third floor was a full open space, functioning as the first location of the Western Union Telegraph Office (per Mr. Link of Dart Drug Headquarters).

6. Alterations and additions: Since the first floor was divided into four separate retail stores, permits refer to the specific store by address; from north to south on Eleventh Street, 437, 435, 433, and 431. When known, address is given below.
  - a. The first alteration to 431-437 Eleventh Street occurred 12 June 1912 (Building Permit #5894) at 435 Eleventh Street, when a four foot wide window was constructed at the second story level above the entrance door. The contractor for the work was Charles H. Soran, of Washington. The window is extant.
  - b. The original show window at 431 Eleventh Street was removed and replaced by two small show windows on 11 January 1922 (Building Permit #5046). New interior partitions were set and the first floor staircase was moved (original banister reused; newell base from original staircase still evident at ceiling level). No architect or contractor were noted.
  - c. In 1926 (21 January, Building Permit #6185), the show window

- at 435 Eleventh Street was removed and replaced with two smaller show windows and a central entrance. A single roof covered both show windows and projected three feet from the building line.
- d. At 437 Eleventh Street, Architect N.R. Gwinns of Washington made alterations to the storefront (no specific details given) and replaced the base of the show window, west marquis. (7 January, 1929, Building Permit #120058).
  - e. In 1930, (16 May, Building Permit #132944), the show window at 433 Eleventh Street was repaired by building a new 8" brick base and installing new glass. The existing cornice was to remain. The architect was A.S.J. Atkinson, and the contractor was B.G. Gardener; both of Washington.
  - f. Permit #160682, 10 February 1933, requests permission to sandblast the building at 433 Eleventh Street and 1014 'E' Street.
  - g. In 1940, at 431-433 Eleventh Street, Permit #236297 (6 July) calls for removal of the existing show window and brick pier and the installation of "I" beams and a new show window. The architect was Tom M. Medford and the contractor was the Washington Clay Company. Daily inspection reports show projection of two marquis and three show windows.
  - h. On October 3, 1940, Building Permit #237231 was filed for 435-437 Eleventh Street including the removal of a section of wall between buildings and the installation of steel beams and columns.
  - i. In 1950, when the Smith Typewriter Exchange was located on the second and third floors at 431 Eleventh Street, Architect W. King altered the location of the stairway and constructed a new balcony with

steel supports. The engineer was Frank R. Silkey. (Building Permit #A5596, 31 March 1950).

- j. At 437 Eleventh Street, one chimney was taken down to roof level due to deterioration by contractor H. Dixon. (Building Permit #A22248, 20 July 1951).
- k. In February 1951, a 5' x 7' opening was cut through the party walls on the third floor between 429-431 Eleventh Street (429 Eleventh Street is located on Lot 19 and is currently occupied by the Alla Scala Restaurant). Two Class "A" fire doors were installed in the wall opening which was supported by two 6" x 6" lintels. The permit indicates the space was used for storage. Robert Goodman was the builder.
- l. In 1956 (19 January, Building Permit #7325), the existing stairs, partitions and flooring in the rear of 433-437 Eleventh Street were removed and new joists were placed in the floor.

B. Historic Persons and Event Connected with the Structure

The earliest records of the Orme Family (owners of Lot 10 from before 1839 to 1975) date from the early settlements in Georgetown. A tract of land north of 'P' Street was known as "Orme's Luck" between 1700 and 1776 (Records of the Columbia Historical Society, V. II, P. 140). Archibald Orme operated a tobacco farm at the mouth of Rock Creek in 1756 (RCHS, V. IX, P. 78). In 1757, Archibald Orme was the assistant to Colonel William Beatty (later renowned in the Revolutionary War) in the surveying of Georgetown properties (RCHS, V. XVII, P. 9,10,24). Orme's brother, John, also worked as a surveyor from 1751-1762 (RCHS, V. XI, P. 163). During the election of D.C. Corporation officials in 1834, Rezin Orme acted as an election commissioner of the second ward at the Hotel of R.I. Morsell (E Street and 13½ Street, N.W.) (RCHS, V. XXV, P. 113).

The two generations of the Orme family directly involved with the property at Lot 10 included William and James Orme, Sr., with William's son James Orme, Jr. and his sons. William Orme Sr., was appointed in 1857, to the Committee for the Purpose of Renewing Past Actions of the Board of Common Council of the Corporation of D.C., with reference to building a new centre market house (RCHS, V. XXVI, P. 48). In 1865, he was one of the directors of the Board of Trade in D.C. (RCHS, V. XXI, P. 227). His brother James Orme, Sr., was an elder of the West Street Church at Twenty-First and 'P' Streets, N.W., in 1872 (RCHS, V. XV, P. 82). James Orme, Jr., took ownership of Lot 10 in 1890 and hired William Poindexter to design his building in 1893.

Due to the division of 431-437 Eleventh Street into several rental spaces, there were a great variety of businesses located here. The third floor was initially occupied by the first D.C. office of the Western Union Telegraph Company (Charles Link, Dart Drug Corp.). This space was later occupied by the Washington Dance Academy from 1917-1924. In 1925, the Remington Cash Register Company was located at 431 Eleventh Street, which, in 1930, is listed as the Stone Building, housing the Stone Mercantile Agency and the National Barbers Supply Company. At 435-437 Eleventh Street was Groces Pawnbrokers (1905-1913), Groces Sporting Goods (1914-1929) and Groces Hardware Store (1930). The Dart Drug moved into 433-437 Eleventh Street in 1956 and are still the current tenants. The Vienna Hat Company occupied their current location in the south commercial section in 1917 and remained until 1980.

### C. Bibliography

#### 1. Primary Sources



- a. District of Columbia Building Permits, 1877-1950. National Archives, Environmental Resources Division, Record Group 351, Washington, D.C.
  - b. District of Columbia Deed Records. Recorder of Deeds, Washington, D.C.
  - c. District of Columbia Tax and General Assessment Records, 1839-1922. National Archives, Environmental Resources Division, Record Group 351, Washington, D.C.
2. Secondary Sources: All of the following are available at the Washingtoniana Room of the Martin Luther King Library, District of Columbia.
- a. Baist Real Estate Atlas Collection.
  - b. District of Columbia Directories (Polk's), 1865-1979.
  - c. Records of the Columbia Historical Society.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Information

1. Architectural Character: The original, as well as the present plans of this 1893 Italianate commercial building represents a versatile solution to the spatial requirements of several commercial businesses housed in one location. Architect Poindexter's solution for this large site incorporated facilities for several small and semi-large businesses into one structure allowing easy alterations as business needs changed. The structure's prominent corner location and sensitive design serves as an anchor to the eclectic mix of small commercial structures on Eleventh Street without overpowering them, by repeating the vertical divisions of neighboring buildings.
2. Condition of fabric

- a. Facade: Although severely altered on street level, the overall facade seems in fairly good condition. Some staining is evident on upper levels and cracking due to settling (?) is also visible.
- b. Roof: Not available for inspection due to insurance reasons.
- c. Interior: The third floor has been determined unsafe by tenants in 431 Eleventh Street (Vienna Hat Company). Due to insurance problems of the Dart Drug Company that occupies the second and third floors of the building, inspection was not feasible.

#### B. Description of exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 431-437 Eleventh Street is rectangular in shape with a chamfered corner at the intersection of Eleventh and "E" Streets. The Eleventh Street facade has four bays and is 75' long. The "E" Street facade has two bays and is 50' long. The three story building measure 40' from sidewalk to eaves. Along both facades are three foot projecting show windows.
2. Foundations: concrete.
3. Wall fenestration, finish and color: Situated on a corner lot, 431-437 Eleventh Street has four bays on Eleventh Street, two bays on "E" Street, and is chamfered at the northwest corner of the building. It is three stories tall with a basement and has a hipped roof. Each facade is composed of round-head arches (two on "E" Street and four on Eleventh Street) extending from the storefront cornice to the top of the third floor. The arches are formed with bull-head brick (laid butt-end out). Between the arches are stepped-in brick panels of brick with half-pilasters (also of brick) extending from the base of the panels to the stringcourse above the storefront. Terra-cotta rosettes are located on the center line of the panels between the

third floor and roof cornices. The base of each round-head arch is slightly projected from the surface of the facade.

The bases of the arches rest on the storefront cornice which has a flat frieze and molded cornice. The existing metal and glass storefront is not original and projects three feet from the building line. The openings for the original windows and/or doors are visible above the extant show windows.

At 431 Eleventh Street (Vienna Hat Company) a cloth awning extends over two metal and glass show windows. To the right (south) is a set of double wooden doors.

The entablature of the building consists of a denticulated frieze with a molded cornice above. A low molded parapet is set in a few inches from the edge of the cymatium.

Above the entrance on the chamfered corner of the building is a large square plastic sign bearing the name and insignia of Dart Drug.

4. Structural system: The foundation of the building is of concrete with brick piers and party walls as vertical support. At some locations on the building steel beams have been installed (see alterations and additions). Horizontal supports are wooden floor joists.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys exist along the back wall and two metal vents along the Eleventh Street facade.
6. Openings
  - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance to the Dart Drug is located at the chamfered corner of Eleventh and "E" Streets with steel and glass doors in a steel frame. The door to the Vienna Hat Company is located at the southernmost bay on Eleventh Street and

is of steel and glass.

- b. Windows: Upper floor windows are one-over-one double-hung sash of wood. Show windows are of steel and glass.

8. Roof: The roof is a low hip roof and is of tin covered with tar and gravel.

### C. Description of Interior

#### 1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement was not available for inspection (insurance problems, according to Mr. Shaeffer, District Manager of Dart Drug).
- b. First floor: The first floor of the north commercial section (Dart Drug), is open space broken by structural piers. Counters are located along the east wall.

The first floor of the south commercial section (Vienna Hat Company) is comprised of a showroom and small storage area to the south of a partition. A doorway at the partition leads to the staircase to the second floor. A small office is located adjacent to the partition doorway along a north/south wall.

- c. Second floor: The second floor of the north commercial section (Dart Drug) was not available for inspection (insurance reasons according to Mr. Shaeffer, District Manager of Dart Drug).

The second floor of the south commercial section (Vienna Hat Company) is a small room, about 16' x 20'. Built-in shelves line the north wall. At the landing of the half-turn stairs along the east wall, is a small room, about 4' x 5'.

- d. Third floor: The third floor extends the entire plan of the building. It was originally built as a hall and is therefore an open space. According to Mr. Shaeffer of the Dart Drug, the

third floor is not being used and is not available for inspection. Employees at the Vienna Hat Company implied that the third floor is very unsafe.

2. Stairways: No staircases were available for inspection in the north commercial section (Dart Drug).

At the Vienna Hat Company, a half-turn staircase is located at the east wall. The balustrade is wood with decorative newells. Stairs are of wood and are deteriorated.

3. Flooring: First floor flooring in Dart Drug is linoleum tiles over wood. At the first floor of the Vienna Hat Company is a painted wood floor. The second floor is unfinished tongue-in-groove wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: At the Dart Drug, a dropped acoustic ceiling covers original surfaces. Walls, also have been covered with a variety of items; shelving and pegboard, being the most prevalent. The walls of the Vienna Hat Company are covered with built-in wood shelves and a dropped acoustic tile ceiling covers original ceiling material.
5. Openings
  - a. Doorways and doors: All interior doors of both Dart Drug and Vienna Hat Company are of wood although not original.
  - b. Windows: Only the Vienna Hat Company window was available for inspection on the second floor. The trim is a simple molded wood.

#### D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: 431-437 Eleventh Street occupies a corner lot at the intersection of Eleventh and "E" Streets. It

is flanked on the south wall on Eleventh Street by the Alla Scala Restaurant (425-429 Eleventh Street, HABS No. D.C.- ), and on "E" Street by a vacant lot. The remainder of Eleventh Street is composed of three and four-story Nineteenth Century commercial structures. Across Eleventh Street from the building is the Hotel Harrington, and at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Eleventh Street is the Evening Star Building. (The 1933 parking garage at the corner of Tenth and "E" Streets was built by the Evening Star Newspaper Company).

Eleventh Street itself is one of the widest north/south axes in the city at 110' from curb to curb, as was intended by L'Enfant.

Square 348 is located in the center of an area that historically functioned as the major newspaper printing and paper supply area Washington during the Nineteenth Century. Eleventh Street was the location of various paper company warehouses, book binding and printing companies, hand embossing firms and a wallpaper manufacturer.

Prepared by W.F. Hunter  
Historian  
PADC  
July 1980

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and Stipulation 6 of the PADC Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The recording of the project was completed under the general supervision of Jeffrey S. Wolf, Architect with PADC. Historic data was compiled and edited by Wendy Hunter, also with PADC. Documentary photographs were taken by J. Wolf.